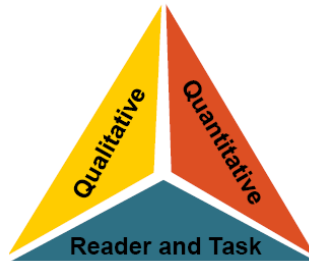


Guide to Selecting a Complex Text for Close Reading: 4 considerations

1. Consider text complexity

- Three measures of text complexity:
 - Qualitative
 - Quantitative
 - Reader & Task
- Hard words don't automatically mean that a text is complex! The difficulty of the words (readability) is just one measure of text complexity. A text can contain words that are easier to read and yet be complex due to its qualitative measures or due to the specific reader or task
- Become familiar with the levels of text complexity for your grade level band
- Become familiar with common texts within your grade level band
- Complex texts should stretch towards the higher end of the grade level complexity band to ensure that all students are given access to and are being taught how to comprehend grade-level texts. If a complex text is beyond a student's independent reading level, the teacher must use instructional scaffolds to ensure access to the text



"Complex texts require a slower labor. Readers can't proceed to the next paragraph without grasping the previous one, they can't glide over unfamiliar words and phrases, and they can't forget what they read four pages earlier. They must double back, discern ambiguities, follow tricky transitions, and keep a dictionary close at hand. Complex texts force readers to acquire the knack of slow linear reading. If they rarely encounter complex texts, young students won't even realize that such a reading task is a necessary means of learning. Unready students might be just as intelligent and motivated as the ready ones are, but they don't possess the habits and strategies needed to carry on."

Mark Bauerlein, "Too Dumb for Complex Texts?"
Educational Leadership, February 2011

A Balance of Three Measures of Text Complexity

Measure	How Measured?	Example
Qualitative	By an attentive reader: Levels of meaning/purpose, structure, language conventionality and clarity, and knowledge demands, Emotional/age-appropriateness	Fountas & Pinnell Levels
Quantitative	By computer software: Readability measures including word and sentence analysis	Lexile Fry ATOS
Matching Text to Reader and Task	By a skilled educator: Considerations of reader and considerations of task	Motivation Knowledge Experiences Emotional/age-appropriateness Purpose of Task Complexity of Task Complexity of Questions Posed

2. Consider your readers

- Reflect on your students as readers, including studying their reading data

- What types and kinds of texts have been complex for your students? Why?
- What specific reading tasks have been complex for your students? Why?
- In close reading, students should struggle and grapple with texts that are increasingly complex for them. This is an opportunity for students to take reading strategies and turn them into automatic skills through instruction and practice.

3. Consider worth and length of Text

- Does the text you're considering merit a deep dive and require repeated readings for true comprehension?
- An ideal text for close reading is rich and contains many teaching and thinking possibilities
- Not every text should be read through close reading - close reading is one structure within a teaching repertoire, some wonderful texts that you love may not be good candidates for a close reading.
- Short texts work best! With a complex text, the reader will need to engage in multiple readings. Constraining the length of the text allows the reader to focus on more in a shorter period of time.
- Teachers can focus on a shorter section of a longer text. Complexity levels for the longer text may not be the same for the short section you choose. Be sure to evaluate the short section on it's own merits.

Online Sources for Short Texts

Resource	Overview	Link
CCSS – Appendix B	Common Core suggested text and performance tasks for each grade level band	http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf
North Carolina ELA Text Exemplars	Links to downloadable texts	http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/acre/standards/common-core-tools/exemplar/ela.pdf
Aesop's Fables	Compilation of short fables with picture support.	http://www.gutenberg.org/files/19994/19994-h/19994-h.htm#Page_50
Read Works	Passages for grades 2-7 with Lexile levels	http://www.readworks.org
The Library of Congress	Primary and secondary sources	http://www.loc.gov/topics
American Literature	Short stories	http://www.americanliterature.com/

4. Consider Purpose for Using Text

- What units, genres, and/or kinds of texts will you be teaching next?
- Are there any genres or sub-genres that have been particularly complex for your students?
- Is there a genre or kind of text you've already taught that you'd like to teach again or feel, based on student achievement, that you need to teach again?
- Is there a genre or kind of text you've not had success with?

Appendices for Further Information

- 1) *Lexile Bands Chart: Lexile levels for grade level bands*
- 2) *Grade Level Correlation Chart: Correlations between the most commonly used reading level systems.*
- 3) *Qualitative Rubrics for both Informational and Fiction texts: Examples of measures for the different qualitative aspects*
- 4) *Vertical Progression - Standard 10: Progression from Kindergarten through Grade 12. Standard 10 specifies the texts students at each grade level should be learning how to comprehend*

Common Core Lexile Bands Chart

From the Common Core Standards Appendix A
http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_A.pdf

Text Complexity Grade Band in the Standards	Old Lexile Ranges	Lexile Ranges Aligned to CCR expectations
K-1	N/A	N/A
2-3	450-725	450-790
4-5	645-845	770-980
6-8	860-1010	955-1155
9-10	960-1115	1080-1305
11-CCR	1070-1220	1215-1355

Reading Level Correlation Chart

Grade Level	Reading Recovery	Fountas-Pinnell Guided Reading	DRA	Basal Equivilant	Lexile Levels	
Kindergarten	A, B	A	A	Readiness		
	1		1			
	2	B	2	PrePrimer 1		
	3	C	3			
4	4		PrePrimer 2			
5	D	6				
6						
Grade 1	7	E	8	PrePrimer 3		
	8					
	9	F	10	Primer		
	10					
	11	G	12			
	12					
	13	H	14	Grade 1	200-299	
	14					
	15	I	16			
	16					
	Grade 2	18	J, K	20	Grade 2	300-399
		20	L, M	28		400-499
	Grade 3	22	N	30	Grade 3	500-599
34						
24		O, P	38	600-699		
Grade 4	26	Q, R, S	40	Grade 4	700-799	
Grade 5	28	T, U, V	44	Grade 5	800-899	
Grade 6	30	W, X, Y		Grade 6	900-999	
Grade 7	32	Z		Grade 7	1000-1100	
Grade 8	34	Z		Grade 8		

Text Complexity: Qualitative Measures Rubric¹

LITERATURE

Text Title _____

Text Author _____

	Exceedingly Complex	Very Complex	Moderately Complex	Slightly Complex
TEXT STRUCTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organization: Is intricate with regard to such elements as point of view, time shifts, multiple characters, storylines and detail ○ Use of Graphics: If used, illustrations or graphics are essential for understanding the meaning of the text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organization: May include subplots, time shifts and more complex characters ○ Use of Graphics: If used, illustrations or graphics support or extend the meaning of the text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organization: May have two or more storylines and occasionally be difficult to predict ○ Use of Graphics: If used, a range of illustrations or graphics support selected parts of the text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organization: Is clear, chronological or easy to predict ○ Use of Graphics: If used, either illustrations directly support and assist in interpreting the text or are not necessary to understanding the meaning of the text
LANGUAGE FEATURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conventionality: Dense and complex; contains abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language ○ Vocabulary: Complex, generally unfamiliar, archaic, subject-specific, or overly academic language; may be ambiguous or purposefully misleading ○ Sentence Structure: Mainly complex sentences with several subordinate clauses or phrases; sentences often contain multiple concepts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conventionality: Fairly complex; contains some abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language ○ Vocabulary: Fairly complex language that is sometimes unfamiliar, archaic, subject-specific, or overly academic ○ Sentence Structure: Many complex sentences with several subordinate phrases or clauses and transition words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conventionality: Largely explicit and easy to understand with some occasions for more complex meaning ○ Vocabulary: Mostly contemporary, familiar, conversational; rarely unfamiliar or overly academic ○ Sentence Structure: Primarily simple and compound sentences, with some complex constructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conventionality: Explicit, literal, straightforward, easy to understand ○ Vocabulary: Contemporary, familiar, conversational language ○ Sentence Structure: Mainly simple sentences
MEANING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meaning: Multiple competing levels of meaning that are difficult to identify, separate, and interpret; theme is implicit or subtle, often ambiguous and revealed over the entirety of the text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meaning: Multiple levels of meaning that may be difficult to identify or separate; theme is implicit or subtle and may be revealed over the entirety of the text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meaning: Multiple levels of meaning clearly distinguished from each other; theme is clear but may be conveyed with some subtlety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meaning: One level of meaning; theme is obvious and revealed early in the text.
KNOWLEDGE DEMANDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Life Experiences: Explores complex, sophisticated or abstract themes; experiences portrayed are distinctly different from the common reader ○ Intertextuality and Cultural Knowledge: Many references or allusions to other texts or cultural elements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Life Experiences: Explores themes of varying levels of complexity or abstraction; experiences portrayed are uncommon to most readers ○ Intertextuality and Cultural Knowledge: Some references or allusions to other texts or cultural elements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Life Experiences: Explores several themes; experiences portrayed are common to many readers ○ Intertextuality and Cultural Knowledge: Few references or allusions to other texts or cultural elements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Life Experiences: Explores a single theme; experiences portrayed are everyday and common to most readers ○ Intertextuality and Cultural Knowledge: No references or allusions to other texts or cultural elements

¹ Adapted from Appendix A: Research Supporting Key Elements of the Standards, Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies and Science and Technical Subjects (2010).

Text Complexity: Qualitative Measures Rubric

INFORMATIONAL TEXTS

Text Title_____

Text Author_____

	Exceedingly Complex	Very Complex	Moderately Complex	Slightly Complex
TEXT STRUCTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organization: Connections between an extensive range of ideas, processes or events are deep, intricate and often ambiguous; organization is intricate or discipline-specific ○ Text Features: If used, are essential in understanding content ○ Use of Graphics: If used, intricate, extensive graphics, tables, charts, etc., are extensive are integral to making meaning of the text; may provide information not otherwise conveyed in the text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organization: Connections between an expanded range ideas, processes or events are often implicit or subtle; organization may contain multiple pathways or exhibit some discipline-specific traits ○ Text Features: If used, directly enhance the reader's understanding of content ○ Use of Graphics: If used, graphics, tables, charts, etc. support or are integral to understanding the text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organization: Connections between some ideas or events are implicit or subtle; organization is evident and generally sequential or chronological ○ Text Features: If used, enhance the reader's understanding of content ○ Use of Graphics: If used, graphic, pictures, tables, and charts, etc. are mostly supplementary to understanding the text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organization: Connections between ideas, processes or events are explicit and clear; organization of text is chronological, sequential or easy to predict ○ Text Features: If used, help the reader navigate and understand content but are not essential to understanding content. ○ Use of Graphics: If used, graphic, pictures, tables, and charts, etc. are simple and unnecessary to understanding the text but they may support and assist readers in understanding the written text
LANGUAGE FEATURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conventionality: Dense and complex; contains considerable abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language ○ Vocabulary: Complex, generally unfamiliar, archaic, subject-specific, or overly academic language; may be ambiguous or purposefully misleading ○ Sentence Structure: Mainly complex sentences with several subordinate clauses or phrases and transition words; sentences often contains multiple concepts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conventionality: Fairly complex; contains some abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language ○ Vocabulary: Fairly complex language that is sometimes unfamiliar, archaic, subject-specific, or overly academic ○ Sentence Structure: Many complex sentences with several subordinate phrases or clauses and transition words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conventionality: Largely explicit and easy to understand with some occasions for more complex meaning ○ Vocabulary: Mostly contemporary, familiar, conversational; rarely overly academic ○ Sentence Structure: Primarily simple and compound sentences, with some complex constructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conventionality: Explicit, literal, straightforward, easy to understand ○ Vocabulary: Contemporary, familiar, conversational language ○ Sentence Structure: Mainly simple sentences
PURPOSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Purpose: Subtle and intricate, difficult to determine; includes many theoretical or abstract elements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Purpose: Implicit or subtle but fairly easy to infer; more theoretical or abstract than concrete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Purpose: Implied but easy to identify based upon context or source 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Purpose: Explicitly stated, clear, concrete, narrowly focused
KNOWLEDGE DEMANDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Subject Matter Knowledge: Relies on extensive levels of discipline-specific or theoretical knowledge; includes a range of challenging abstract concepts ○ Intertextuality: Many references or allusions to other texts or outside ideas, theories, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Subject Matter Knowledge: Relies on moderate levels of discipline-specific or theoretical knowledge; includes a mix of recognizable ideas and challenging abstract concepts ○ Intertextuality: Some references or allusions to other texts or outside ideas, theories, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Subject Matter Knowledge: Relies on common practical knowledge and some discipline-specific content knowledge; includes a mix of simple and more complicated, abstract ideas ○ Intertextuality: Few references or allusions to other texts or outside ideas, theories, etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Subject Matter Knowledge: Relies on everyday, practical knowledge; includes simple, concrete ideas ○ Intertextuality: No references or allusions to other texts, or outside ideas, theories, etc.

Vertical Progression of Standard 10

From the Common Core Standards Appendix A
http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_A.pdf

Grade(s)	Reading Standard 10 (individual text types omitted)
K	Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.
1	With prompting and support, read prose and poetry [informational texts] of appropriate complexity for grade 1.
2	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature [informational texts] in the grades 2–3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
3	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature [informational texts] at the high end of the grades 2–3 text complexity band independently and proficiently.
4	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature [informational texts] in the grades 4–5 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
5	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature [informational texts] at the high end of the grades 4–5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.
6	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature [informational texts, history/social studies texts, science/technical texts] in the grades 6–8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
7	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature [informational texts, history/social studies texts, science/technical texts] in the grades 6–8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
8	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature [informational texts, history/social studies texts, science/technical texts] at the high end of the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.
9–10	By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literature [informational texts, history/social studies texts, science/technical texts] in the grades 9–10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
	By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literature [informational texts, history/social studies texts, science/technical texts] at the high end of the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.
11–12	By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature [informational texts, history/social studies texts, science/technical texts] in the grades 11–CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
	By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature [informational texts, history/social studies texts, science/technical texts] at the high end of the grades 11–CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.